

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, and 18 are currently pending. Claims 3, 6, 11, and 14-17 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer; and Claims 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, and 18 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are for the purpose of clarification only and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 3, 11, 14, and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,999,504 to Aoki (hereinafter “the ‘504 patent”); Claims 6, 15, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the ‘504 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,862,123 to Horie et al. (hereinafter “the ‘123 patent”); and Claims 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, and 18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

It is respectfully submitted that the rejections of Claims 3, 11, 14, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) are rendered moot by the present cancellation of those claims.

Further, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections of Claims 6, 15, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are rendered moot by the present cancellation of those claims.

Claims 4 and 5 have been rewritten in independent form, and to include the limitations of base Claim 3. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 4 and 5 are in condition for formal allowance. Further, Claims 7 and 18 have been rewritten in independent form, and to include the limitations of base Claim 6. Accordingly, based on the indicated allowability of Claims 7 and 18, it is respectfully submitted that those claims are in condition for formal allowance. Moreover, Claims 12 and 13 have been rewritten in independent form, and to include the limitations of base Claim 11. Accordingly, based on the

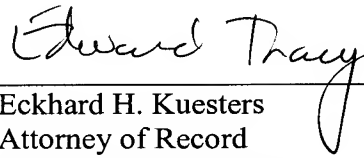
indicated allowability of Claims 12 and 13, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 12 and 13 are in condition for formal allowance.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, and 18 patentably define over any proper combination of the '504 and '123 patents, and are in condition for formal allowance.

Accordingly, in view of the prior indication of allowability, no further issues are outstanding and entry of the present amendment is believed to be in order. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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